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## Modality in Greek Music (1900-50) in Expressing Different Perceptions of the Nation

by *Kostas Chardas*

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# Modality in Greek Music (1900-50) in Expressing Different Perceptions of the Nation

*Kostas Chardas*

**Abstract:** A variety of modal collections (from different traditions, or self-invented) entered Greek art music from 1900 to 1950. Since the modal intervallic content inevitably determines the final sound result, these collections and the way they are employed essentially express a wide spectrum of ideological inclinations and nuances, even, within the widely-spread nationalist agenda of the era. Drawing on research from the modern Greek studies, the present chapter proposes to examine modality as expressing and promoting different perceptions of Greek identity: the *Romeic* (which gives emphasis to the Byzantine past) and the *Hellenic* (which opts for the ancient Greek heritage). Detailed analysis on specific works discusses how these different perceptions of national identity may be seen to be expressed by modality in the music of two members of the first generation of Greek nationalist composers (Manolis Kalomiris and Petros Petridis) and two of the second generation (Menelaos Pallandios and Yannis A. Papaioannou).

The aim of the present research is to open up the critical approach to modality as a vehicle for understanding nuances of the notion of musical nationalism in Greece of the first half of the 20th century, beyond its initial promotion as an homogenous cultural movement.

**Keywords:** Greece; modality; identity; Romeic; Hellenic.

Contributing to the central theme of the Conference, in the present paper, I discuss my first thoughts on how the exploration of modality in the so-called nationalist Greek music of the years 1900-1950 could uncover interesting, I believe, wider perceptions of the nation and aspirations for the nation. Before considering the ideological framework of this discussion, let us think of some seminal questions arising from the use of modal collections by composers of the twentieth century.

A) The first question concerns the ontological perception of the modes by the composers. How does each composer perceive the term and the substance of the mode: as abstract scalic material, or, according to its generic melodic or harmonic

environment, as comprising characteristic melodic formulas and other, not exclusively tonal, hierarchies?

B) Which are the modal collections in use? Do they carry certain cultural connotations? Are they self-invented, and, if yes, on which model are they based?

And finally, C) How are the modes used? How are they harmonised (with reference to tonal functions, or not) and, most importantly, how do they contribute to large-scale formal delineation?

The present paper examines some of these themes with reference to four composers who belong to two different generations which ensured the continuing power of nationalist ideas in the first half of the twentieth century in Greece. The first two are from the first generation of nationalist composers: a) Manolis Kalomiris (1883-1962), the so-called father-figure of the Greek National School, an exceptionally versatile and influential personality within the nationalist movement, b) Petros Petridis (1892-1977), a composer and intellectual who contributed to music of nationalist aspirations mainly through absolute music forms. Of the next generation we will discuss the ideas and practical exploration of modality by a) Menelaos Pallandios (1914-2012), an educator, composer and intellectual whose continuing influence emanated from his position as the director of the Athens Conservatoire (1962-1976) and as a member of the prestigious Greek Academy, and b) Yannis A. Papaioannou (1910-1989), who played a decisive role in the advent of modernist musical idioms in post-1950 Greece through his compositional, institutional and educational activities.<sup>1</sup>

As eloquently argued by Jim Samson, the music of these and other composers demonstrates Greece's passage to modernity through an ongoing and creative discourse between east and west. And even if west is apparently self-evident in this art music movement which celebrates the idea of creative genius and centres in the concept of the artwork,<sup>2</sup> this merging involves interesting shadings within diverse understandings, perceptions and visions of Greek identity.

As Peter Mackridge argues, "The development of Greek identity since the eighteenth century has been complicated by the fact that Greeks used three different names for themselves":<sup>3</sup> *Rōmaioi*, *Graikoi* or *Ellēnes*. *Rōmaioi* [Romans] became the name used by the Byzantine emperors and their subjects, since Constantinople was founded as the 'New Rome'. However, the word *Graikos* was in use by Greeks living outside Greece and gave rise to the equivalents in all modern European languages. The ancient name of Hellenes (*Ellēnes*) was chosen by the first Provisional Constitution for the

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<sup>1</sup> Kostas Chardas, *The Music for Solo Piano of Yannis A. Papaioannou up to 1960: An Analytical, Biographical and Contextual Approach* (Saarbrücken: Lambert Academic Publishing, 2010). The present paper takes into account Papaioannou's music up to 1950, in which modality played a structural role.

<sup>2</sup> Jim Samson, *Music in the Balkans* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2013), 268.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Mackridge, *Language and National Identity in Greece, 1766–1976* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 48.

citizens of the new state, obviously echoing Western Philhellenism.<sup>4</sup> The late nineteenth and the early twentieth century saw the resurfacing of the debate especially over the names *Rōmios* and *Hellene*. In fact, as Dimitris Tziovas argues, "the controversy over the names *Romiosyni* and *Hellenism* was not a simple debate about terms, but a confrontation concerning the constitution of the historical past".<sup>5</sup> The controversy echoes the two different views regarding the Greek past which are put forward by the opponents of the so-called language question of this period: the battle between the archaising *katharevousa* and the colloquial *dēmotikē* (vernacular). "The proponents of the *katharevousa* stressed emphatically the derogatory meaning of the name *Rōmios*, giving, at the same time, through the use of the name *Hellene*, emphasis to the ancient Greek past."<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, the demoticists "emphasized the Byzantine period along with the period of the Ottoman occupation, [...] together with their cultural products (folk songs, demotic language)".<sup>7</sup>

Aesthetically, the Romeic identity was charged with vigor, bravery, sentimentality, spontaneity, intuition and vitality, while the Hellenic with the ancient Greek values of balance, measure, clarity and coherence.

Especially with regard to modality, on a surface level, the characteristic eastern element of the augmented second ensures an unmistakable Romeic association. However, because of the appropriation of the ancient Greek theory by the west, the use of the so-called church modes by Greek composers surely acquires various connotations. The present paper aspires to open a critical approach to how modality reflects some interesting nuances/shades and/or dialogues of difference perceptions of Greekness by composers up to 1950.

As Anastasia Siopsi has minutely argued, Kalomiris believed in the perception of tradition as a "living organism" embodied into the present.<sup>8</sup> Kalomiris's theoretical and practical approaches to modality palpably demonstrate this attitude. His only extant theoretical text on modality dates from 1935,<sup>9</sup> from his mature age as a composer, and essentially presents his own perception of the modal Greek tradition, without raising claims of scientific validity.

He rather discusses the modal categories which he proposes on the basis of their practical, intuitive and immediate exploration. This is possibly the reason why he

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<sup>4</sup> See, also, Samson, *Music in the Balkans*, 146.

<sup>5</sup> Dimitrios Tziovas, *The Nationism of the Demoticists and its Impact on their Literary Theory, 1888–1930: An Analysis Based on their Literary Criticism and Essays* (Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1986), 81.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

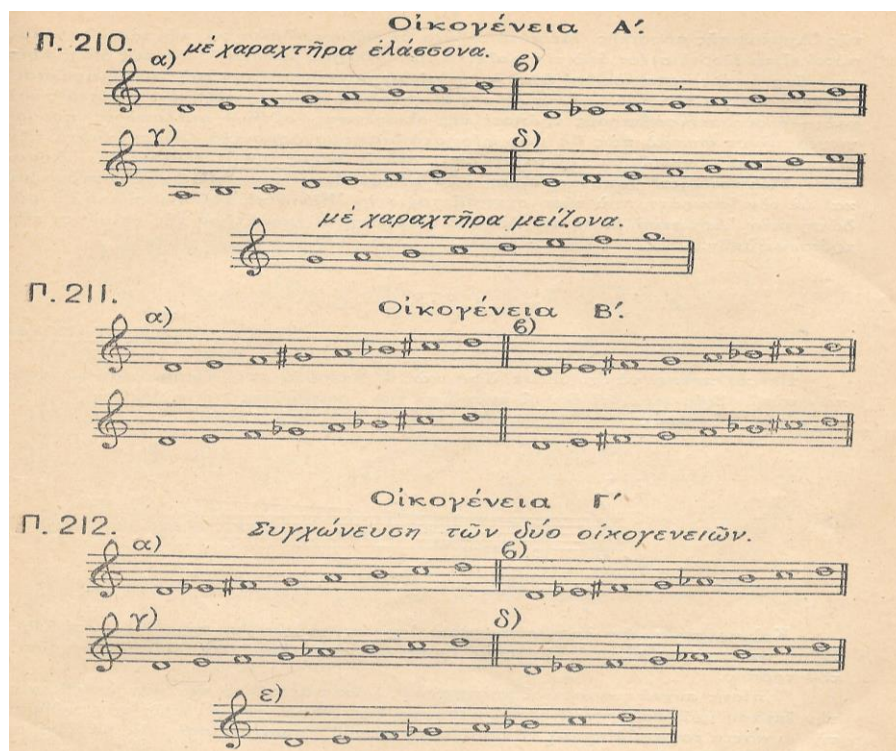
<sup>8</sup> Anastasia Siopsi, *Τρία Δοκίμια για τον Μανώλη Καλομοίρη* [Three Essays on Manolis Kalomiris]. (Athens: C. Papagrigoriou - H. Nakas, 2003), 21-29.

<sup>9</sup> It is the sixteenth chapter of the second volume of his textbook on harmony: Manolis Kalomiris, *Αρμονία, Τεύχος Δεύτερο* [Harmony, Volume Two]. (Athens: Stefanos Gaitanos, 1935), 178-200.

organizes them according to their capacity to yield leading-note motions or not, echoing the renowned western harmonic theories of Ernst Kurth and Hugo Riemann. Characteristic of this attitude that offers an assimilation of these collections within the western theoretical canon is the fact that Kalomiris divides the modal collections of the first group of modes (without leading-note) into those of minor and major character, as is shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**

Manolis Kalomiris, *Αρμονία, Τεύχος Δεύτερο είναι* (Harmony, Volume Two) (Athens: Stefanos Gaitanos, 1935) 179: The three families of the modes by Greek tradition



Thus, Kalomiris's theoretical discussion of the modes essentially promotes them as a source of inspiration within a firm and unquestionable western compositional framework. However, modes with the eastern augmented second do play a strong role in Kalomiris's music, often within a musical representation of self, as other writers have shown.<sup>10</sup> In the present paper, we will focus on two examples. The first is the Prelude No. 4 written in 1939.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example: Demetre Yannou, "Το οικείο και το ξένο – Σχόλια στο τραγούδι 'Από ξένα βασίλεια...' από τα Μαγιοβότανα του Μ. Καλομοίρη," ["The Familiar and the Foreign: Comments on the Song 'From Foreign Kingdoms...' from M. Kalomiris's *Magic Herbs*"], Unpublished paper given in the Conference "Manolis Kalomiris 1962-2002", Athens, 5-7 April 2002.

## Example 1

Manolis Kalomiris, Prelude No. 4 for piano

2  
Andantino quasi Allegretto

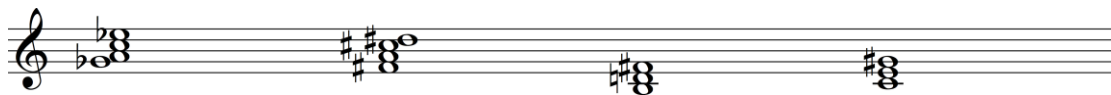
The musical score is written for piano and consists of four systems of staves. The first system begins with a piano (pp) dynamic and the instruction 'ben ritmato', followed by a mezzo-piano (mp) section. The second system features a triplet of eighth notes in the treble. The third system includes a fifth finger (5) marking in the treble. The fourth system contains trills (tr.) and a trill with a flat (tr. b) in the treble, and a seventh finger (7) marking in the bass. The piece concludes with a mezzo-piano (mp) dynamic.

The modal collection (F-Gb-A-B-C-Db-E) is self-invented and includes two augmented seconds, having double leading-notes towards the first and the fifth notes of the scale: E and Gb towards F and B and Db towards C. The nationalist aspiration of the piece is announced by the quasi-improvisatory character of the opening gestures and of the ensuing melodic development throughout the work and is secured by the *kalamatianos* rhythmic pattern in 7/8 in the main section. The high register and the melismatic character of the melodic line (see Example 1) and the melodic exploration of the two augmented seconds draw a pastoral picture, making reference to a peasant's φλογέρα (flute) playing. The opening harmony (F-B-C) is twice decorated at the opening by the B-Db-F harmony (that emanates from the modal collection) which also functions as the harmonic path back to the basic sonority near the end - see Example 1. The remaining harmonies of the piece are routed on notes from the mode (see Example 2) and

essentially provide the harmonic expression of the quasi-improvisatory attitude, by essentially adding harmonic colour to the melodic line. Thus, here the mode contributes to a musical depiction of a Romeic (pastoral) image while the harmonic palette relates to the mode, but also confirms the intuitive contemporaneity of the final result.

### Example 2

The remaining harmonies of M. Kalomiris's Prelude No. 4



### Example 3

Manolis Kalomiris, *Oblivion* for voice and piano on poetry by L. Mavilis: The transformation of the motive through different tetrachords

Όν- τας βυ-θή-σηο ή-λιος και το σου- ρου ποα-κλου-θή-ση

Dorian tetrachord in the accompaniment

Major tetrachord in the instrumental interlude

Chromatic tetrachord by the voice

The next example to discuss shows the power of the modal transformation of a characteristic motive to add further meanings to that of the text. The poem *Λήθη* (Oblivion) by Lorentzos Mavilis talks on how the dead forget about the pains of life, by drinking the water of oblivion every dusk. The modal transformation of a motive adds to the overall narrative. The piece was written for either voice, string quartet and piano, or for voice and piano in 1912.

As shown in Example 3, in its first presentation only by the accompaniment, the motive walks on the Dorian tetrachord D-E-F-G, depicting the dusk (in Kalomiris's



music Dorian mode is often associated with scenes of nature).<sup>11</sup> In its second appearance, in the instrumental interlude, the motive utilizes the major tetrachord, while the chromatic accompaniment heightens the tension concluding to the Dominant on D in first inversion. In its final and more dramatic entrance, the same motive is now heard by the singing voice on the chromatic tetrachord D-Eb-F#-G, within a Romeic declamatory depiction of pain.

In his writings on modes, Petridis has questioned the capacity of modes with augmented seconds to depict Greek identity.<sup>12</sup> Beyond this seminal comment and beyond Petridis's use of references to Greek antiquity in various arguments in his texts and his predilection for the classical period of western music versus the excesses of romanticism,<sup>13</sup> my analysis on the modality of his music unearthed qualities that could be understood through the Hellenic perception of Greek identity, focusing on the quest for clarity and economy of means. In this respect, it is noteworthy that in Petridis's early writings, he proposes the educated, organized and essentially formal exploration of Greek musical traditions, while he openly opts for a classicist or neoclassical aesthetics.<sup>14</sup>

The first movement of his Trio for violin, cello and piano is a good example of the power of formal shaping that Petridis assigns to modal collections.<sup>15</sup> However, in this paper, the focus will be on Petridis's Suite No.1 in A for piano, with the title *Le clavier modal* (1933). In this work, the large-scale unfolding of the tonal centers creates an intricate net of associations. As shown on the table of Figure 2, the first and second movements start and end in A (with a picardy ending), the third follows the prerequisites of a baroque binary form, the fourth follows the path of the first two movements, the fifth starts in A and ends in C, the sixth tonicizes the dominant and both sections of the binary formal shape of the last movement surprisingly enough end on a D major chord. In the first movement of the Trio, we also encounter a similar

<sup>11</sup> For example, the first movement of his suite for violin and piano *Aux Isles* is entitled *A l'aube* (At the Dawn) and is mainly based on a Dorian from G.

<sup>12</sup> Biron Fidetzis, "Κείμενα για την ελληνική μουσική στην εφημερίδα *Εσπερία*," [Texts on Greek Music in the Newspaper *Esperia*"]. *Mousikologia* Vol. 7-8, 119-146.

<sup>13</sup> Petros Petridis, "Ρωμαντισμός και εθνικές σχολές στη μουσική," [Romanticism and National Schools in Music] *Kathimerini*. I accessed Petridis's article online in the following address, where no date is mentioned: <http://digital.lib.auth.gr/record/108366/files/arc-2008-45685.pdf> (last access: 9 August 2019).

<sup>14</sup> Fidetzis, "Κείμενα για ...".

<sup>15</sup> Vasiliki Zlatkou, "Petros Petridis, Trio for piano, violin and violoncello (1934): The Relation of Sonata Form With Modality and its Interaction with European and Hellenistic Influences of 20th-century music", Proceedings of Crossroads Conference (June 6-10 2011), *Greece as an Intercultural Pole of Musical Thought and Creativity*, ed. by Evi Nika-Sampson, Giorgos Sakallieros, Maria Alexandru, Giorgos Kitsios, Emmanouil Giannopoulos (Thessaloniki: School of Music Studies, A.U.TH./I.M.S., 2013), 919-932.

overall motion from g to c. It is quite tempting to think in Schenkerian terms and understand this motion as a fifth-related large-scale directed motion. The modal vocabulary of the sections, however, weakens this reading. The plagal relationship of ancient Greek modes might give another answer, which, however, says nothing on the actual functional route of the music.

**Figure 2**

Petros Petridis, *Le clavier modal*: Tonal centres at the opening and the end of each movement

Movement	Tonal Centers
I	a-A
II	a – A
III	a - e / e -a
IV	a – A
V	a – c
VI	E – E
VII	a - D / a – D

### Example 4

Petros Petridis, *Le clavier modal*, IV: Graph of the main motivic events

Let us focus on the fourth movement which exemplifies in a straightforward way the qualities I mentioned before. Here, the choral texture with the restrained contrapuntal part-movement, the stepwise melodic movement and the picardy phrasal endings echoes church music of both east and west. Modality also contributes to an overall ascetic quality. As you can see in the graph of Example 4, the occurrences of the opening melodic motive, which is first heard within a Phrygian mode on A, outline a middleground projection of an A minor chord, creating a remarkably interesting connection within the horizontal and vertical dimensions. Moreover, while much of the music relies on A-centred modal collections, the only two cadences away from A are on D and they frame the work within a further large-scale projection of harmonic economy.

In the example by Pallandios, the reference to Greek antiquity is quite expectably much more evident, since it is a song for voice and piano entitled *Antigone's Lament* on a text by Pallandios which is based on Sophocles's *Antigone*. Pallandios's writings of the period offer a reflection on music of the historiographical schema of the Greek nation's continuity through epochs, which was constructed during the nineteenth century.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Menelaos Pallandios, "Οι τρεις εποχές της ελληνικής δημιουργίας," [The Three Epochs of Greek Music], *Ελληνική δημιουργία* 79 (May 1951), 771–774.

### Example 4a

Menelaos Pallandios, *Antigone's Lament*: Example of Phrygian cadence

8

πο - λί - τες απ' την ί - δια χώ - ρα τον τε - λευ -

11

ταί - ο δρό - μο μου βα - δί - ζωε - δώ

### Example 4b

Menelaos Pallandios, *Antigone's Lament*: Perfect cadence at the end

12

13

14

15

In *Antigone's Lament*, the overall harmonic structure relies on third-related motions of an obvious romantic influence. However, most melodic cadences are achieved via Phrygian cadences, in many cases through the descending Phrygian tetrachord, as in Example 4a. The Phrygian harmony was the Dorian harmony of the ancient Greek theory and was used in laments. The only western cadence throughout the piece comes at the very end, where a perfect cadence functions more as a symbol of formal ending (Example 4b).

Papaioannou, in his music up to 1945 develops a very interesting modal vocabulary of mainly self-invented modes or of a non-traditional use of existent collections. An example of this is the modal collection that he uses in different pieces in his early music: the one that includes the notes of the Second Plagal, but gives emphasis on the third note, thus: F#-G-Bb-C#-D-Eb.

### Example 5

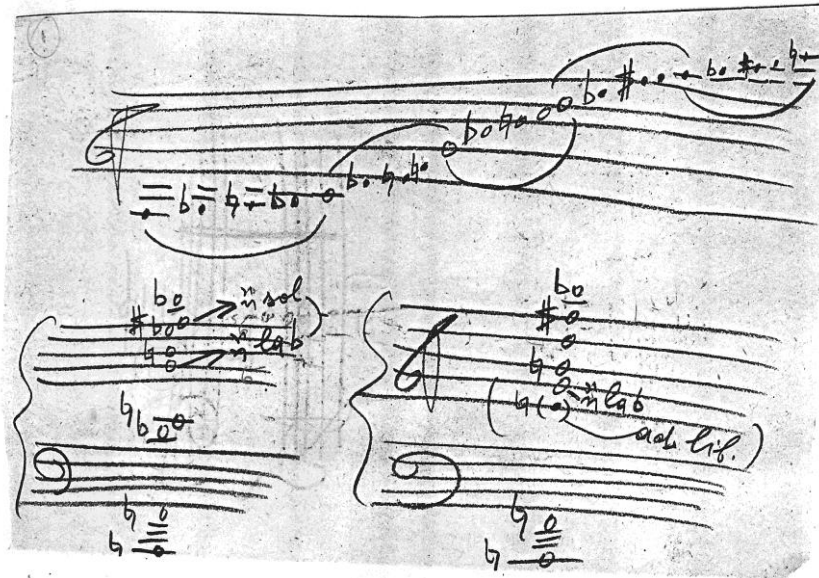
Yannis A. Papaioannou, *Odalisque*: Descending leading-note motions in the first section.



*Odalisque* for piano (1936) provides an example of this. In Example 5, one can see how in the first section of *Odalisque* all the cadential points are achieved through the leading-note motions inherent in the collection (mainly G to F#). Later in the piece, the only large-scale harmonic motion is the move to the chromatic complementary note B in the second section of the ternary design, which in western terms is the subdominant of the centric F#.

### Example 6

Yannis A. Papaioannou: Sketches on *trochos* (© Papaioannou Archive, Historical Archives of Benaki Museum, Envelope "Byzantine Music")



During the second half of the 1940s, Papaioannou approached Byzantine music with scholarly dedication.<sup>17</sup> As numerous sketches testify (see Example 6), the modal collections are used as sources for new sonorities. The most interesting aspect of Papaioannou's music up to 1950, is, I believe, a strategic/intellectual appropriation of Romeic tradition in the service of searching novel ways of organizing sound, while especially with regard to the second period (1945-1950) the belief in authenticity is also noteworthy. Both approaches essentially adumbrate, in my opinion, the modernist aesthetic beliefs in which Papaioannou finally found his creative self after 1950, and in which Greek antiquity, Hellenism, was a stable source of inspiration.

### Conclusions

Conclusively, the present analysis certainly needs further subtlety and exploration. At the core of this analysis lies the question: how does modality in Greek music of nationalist aspirations reflect wider perceptions of the Greek's historical past and, inevitably of their future aspirations. The preceding analysis revealed that immensely

<sup>17</sup> The *Papaioannou Archive*, which is hosted by the Historical Archives of Benaki Museum in Athens, comprises numerous Papaioannou's notes on different aspects of Byzantine chant, as well as his own transcriptions of hymns by the Byzantine tradition. There is an unmistakable focus on the modal vocabulary of this tradition.

stylistically different music (because of its versatile use of modality) seems to serve different perceptions of a complicated and multi-layered nationalist vision in which there is an unending battle of how Greek composers perceived their recent (Byzantine) and / or distance (Hellenic) heritages. Thus, modality could be essentially a powerful research tool in bringing at the forefront discontinuities, differences and plurality within a historiographical category (the nationalist music) whose most important feature has ideologically been the striving for uniformity under the auspices of an imagined homogenous national culture.

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**Biography:** **Kostas Chardas** is an Assistant Professor of Systematic Musicology at the School of Music Studies of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. His research and educational areas include music theory and analysis, 20th- and 21st-century music, Greek music and the interactions within music theory, analysis and performance. He is also an active pianist with concerts in Greece, USA, England and elsewhere and recordings for NAXOS, Centaur Records and Irida Classical.